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Editor: EVE MOBLEY
Assistant Editor: SHARON CRISS
Art Editor: CARMEN YANEZ
Advisor: ELAINE BERMAN

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RAMONA KAN

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Dear Mr. Ciardi,

I'm writing you this letter because I have spent so much time with you lately that I really feel as if I know you. You see, I chose you and your poetry as the subject-topic-theme-focus of my poetry anthology. Had I known then what I have learned now, I could have saved myself a lot of time reading everything by and about you that I could get my hands or eyes on. Now, much the richer and wiser and tireder, I am a personal friend. In the process of getting acquainted I learned a number of things:

First, I learned how to say your name. My teacher corrected my pronunciation the very first time I said your name out loud. I said Key-ar-di. I didn't realize then that your name meant so much to you.

Second, I gained a confidence, if not an ease in explicating poetry. Aside from Mr. William's excellent book, I had to go it on my own. While soloing, I discovered ten steps in explicating poems. I'll share them with you—not because I think you need the information but maybe you would let me know if I have included all the steps.

1) Find a comfortable chair or position and read the poem. Set ten or fifteen as the minimum number of readings and proceed from there.

2) Jot down any thoughts that fly by. They will be valuable later.

3) When you are relatively certain that you have gotten all you can from the poem, close your eyes.

4) Think.

5) Don't move.

6) Think.

7) Now open your eyes and focus on the one thing the poem said to you.

8) You have the theme. Ask yourself how the poet conveyed that theme. In order to answer this question it will be necessary to repeat steps one through seven.

9) Organize your notes into some form of an outline.

10) All that remains is to write the explication and to rewrite and to rewrite . . .

N.B. If you have a teacher who insists (and rightly of course) that whatever you say about a poem you had better be able to back up with the poem, the explication becomes a real test of skill.

As former poetry editor of the no longer *Saturday Review,* you wouldn't be interested in explications of your poems "Men Marry What They Need. I Marry You" and "My Father Died Imperfect as a Man," would you? Knowing that you have a rather enterprising spirit (the poem you sold to *Harper's* for $250 based on a pocket-rendering, forced donation for a boss that originally cost you $12.50), I just thought I would ask.

This letter doesn't need an answer but everyone likes to get mail.

Sincerely,

SR. MARGARET FITZER, S.S.L.

P.S. I am enclosing those explications that I spoke of earlier—just in case.

Grains of Wisdom

My unit of eight and nine year olds came straggling up the dusty path from the lake—matted hair, sandy suits and bodies, and wet tennis shoes stomped down on at the heels. These thirty campers, smelling of suntan lotion and damp sand, were about to teach their inexperienced counsellor some wisdom.

"Sister, can we take a shower? Pleeze, oh, plee-ze, pretty please with ice cream on it!"

"Oh boy," I thought. "I sure didn't expect this!" I looked at my watch. The other two sisters in my unit still had a half-hour off before they would be back. I had been confident that I could handle swimming time. But showers? Quite another matter. But here were these waist-high campers, crowding around me, clamoring for cleanliness. Really, I had nothing against showers, but somewhere deep in my innermost being, something said, "Don't do it." That something was probably wisdom.

"You don't need a shower, girls. The lake is really clean."

"But we didn't have any soap!"

"Yeah, and we're full of sand."

I held my ground.

"But we're cold, Sister. That lake is really freezing!"

They chattered their teeth together to bring home the point. So, what could I do? There I was, thirty pairs of teeth clattering at me. My heart suppressed my wisdom.

"Well, all right then."

"Wheee-hooray!" and off they dashed to get their clean clothes and dry towels.

It wouldn't have been so bad with large enough showers—or even ones that worked properly. But there weren't, and they didn't. The girls noisily divided themselves between the girls' side and the boys'. I ran between the two rooms, directing traffic, undoing buttons and getting knots out. Finally all thirty were in the showers. I darted between the two stations checking on the girls. For a couple of minutes everything went all right. Then I ran again to the girls' side. The water wasn't draining fast enough and the entire floor was ankle deep in soapy, sandy water.

"Sister, my water's cold."

"Sister, I have soap in my eyes."

"Hey, Sister, I dropped my shorts in the water."

Cold water warmed, soap out of the eyes, soaked shorts drying, I madly dashed to the boys' side. Steam hit me in the face and made me draw a deep breath. But the sight waiting for me through all the steam made me exhale it just as fast. There in the middle of the gang shower stood Lisa Braun, bold as brass and just as naked, doing a hula to the girls' humming!

"Oh, Lord, and this is a Catholic camp," I groaned to myself.

"Hey, Sister, look at Lisa."

"I see her. Lisa . . ."

"Hi, Sister, watch me," she interrupted.

"Hey, look at your tennis shoe, Brenda," shouted Patsy, "it floats."

"Girls," I said authoritatively, "it's time to get out and dry off."

"But we can't turn off the water, Sister. It's stuck."

I went into the shower and turned it off.

"Hey, Sister, you're all wet."

"Yes, I know," I answered slowly and deliberately.

They got out of the showers.

Finally, somehow, all thirty girls were dry, dressed, and more or less combed. Now I had the matted hair, and the wet, sandy clothes—and a lot more wisdom.

SR. ELAINE KINDLE, S.D.S.H.

Precarious

nodding on its umbilical string
    blue balloon
        unhurried
            waits for three-year-old
attention to
    stray
        icecreamed fingers
            to release their grasp

a risk

    dangerously
        sheltered life
expiration is certain
    slow
        and
            laborious
by deflation
    or
SUDDENLY!
    by innocent arms
        with too much
love
    to give

SHARON CRISS

A Restless Heart

It is a long time since I crossed this bog on a damp day and smelled its marshy peat. No matter how seldom, I'm always reminded of old Bridget Donaghue. I can still see her sitting in her rocking chair by the open fire, whispering laments that echoed the sad music of the forest pines in Eish-na-Gloch.

When I was just a young man, I often sat with her for long dark hours on winter nights. Every now and then, the drowsy flames would illumine the old woman's face, wrinkled and deepened by the torturing memories that lingered in her heart. When the north wind whined in every lonesome hollow of the bogside and swayed the creaking pines by the kitchen window, the old distracted grief would seize her.

We neighbors knew, or at least we convinced ourselves, that remorse nagged Bridget Donaghue's soul. She grieved ever since that blustery day in November when we carried Paddy home. He had hanged himself in a pine tree at the edge of the forest.

" 'Twasn't his fault, poor man," some of the women said, "sure, he should have been sent to the Mental when Doctor Mulaney said it."

"Oh, but the old woman, she's a proud Donaghue. No son of hers would be going to the Mental."

"Arrah, sure, is there any of us who escapes one disgrace that doesn't meet another?"

"God knows 'tis true and the poor soul 'tis now she knows it well."

For many a day we remembered the great keening Bridget Donaghue made over her son's corpse and long after the last spadeful had covered his grave in Knockatallon Churchyard we watched her move about in a pitiable grief.

"The poor soul is distracted," I often heard them say, "and is it any wonder? 'Tis a cruel world surely that leaves an old woman, of her time of day, in such a lonesome place and she mourning all the while and asking God's mercy."

In the pale shadows of the evening, we often watched her stooped figure standing motionless by the black turf stack, her face turned toward the breeze blowing across the flat bog. Her beads slipped through her weary fingers. A paidrin for Paddy.

At times when I'd hear her foot on the stile and watch her close the door for the night, my heart ached for her sitting alone with the long hours of

darkness before her. To help her while away the time I often slipped over the low stone wall outside her cottage and stepped into the candlelighted kitchen.

She'd greet me from her chair by the fire with, "Come on in, agradh, put your breath to the fire and bring that kettle to the boil. We'll have a cup of tea."

Between the sips we talked. Like most lonesome people in these wild parts, she cried out her grief like the wild birds.

" 'Tis a forlorn place here, surely, without the ones you've cared for. First the father, now the son. When my good man went to God seventeen years ago this January, I said, 'Blessed be God's Holy will,' and I thanked the good Lord for leaving me a son. Many a woman is more blessed but he was my only one. A fine son, a joy to any mother's heart.

"In the long winter nights I held him in my arms and lulled him to sleep and me sittin' here in this same chair. Once in a while when the north wind rose and drove the slanting rain against that window he'd open his lovely solemn eyes and stare at me. I could see in those eyes, round and pale as the moonlight in the winter forest, an honest man who would someday marry a pleasant young girl and be the father of many fine sons . . ."

Her voice quivered. She coughed, wiped the tear from her cheek and had another sip.

"I miss lookin' out and seeing him sittin' among them rushes, chewing a bit of grass, and watching all you good neighbors comin' and goin', bringing home your turf and takin' your wares to the fair.

"He was a good boy, a quiet good-natured boy, and I knew by the way the girls eyed him they were sayin' to themselves he'd make a fine husband.

"Oh, we all loved Paddy, and he loved every branch and bird of this bogside. Even at night I'd hear him lift the latch and go out to watch the moon fade behind the forest, and to hear the curlew's cry echo from the brown bog. To tell you the truth, I never rested 'till I heard the squeaking of the bed springs and the finished rustling of the bed covers."

She pulled herself upright in her basket chair and smoothed her long skirt over her bony legs. I moved closer, and leaned forward.

"One night," she said, "I knelt before the Virgin Mary and prayed whatever was best for my son Paddy would happen while the light of life was in me, that way he wouldn't be left alone in this wild place. 'Twas the night Doctor Mulaney scared the heart crosswise in me and him sayin' Paddy should be goin' to the Mental.

"When the dread of night was on me and him sleeping like a lamb, I got to thinkin' . . . Oh God, I couldn't do it. I could never let any shame come to my only one."

The old woman wrenched and muttered breathless aspirations. Fearing I'd be trespassing on her uneasy conscience I stood, rested my hands on her weary shoulders and said,

"I'd better be on my way now. The hour is late and we could do with some rest."

"Well indeed we could. For those who can rest now let them, but this old woman will never rest 'till she rests in the grave . . ."

As I moved toward the door I could still hear her anguished voice rhyming,

"It is my sorrow sorest,
Woe the falling forest
The north wind gives me no rest
And death's in the sky."

Each step of the bog was heavy with the thought of Bridget Donaghue. To this day her restless spirit roams the hills and hollows of Eish-na-Gloch.

SR. BENITA McARDLE, S.S.L.

Gina

It cannot be
Unbelieving faces turned
To me
Childish voices raised
In joyous song
Sad
White cocoon sealed
Holds mine.
It cannot be

MARGARET TALVIN

The Creation vs. Evolution Controversy

What should be taught regarding the origin of life? Man has always sought to explain natural phenomena in terms of his background, beliefs and personal experiences. As his knowledge has increased, his explanations have changed and have become more complex. Theories, such as these are (evolution included), should be seen not as unchangeable facts, but as flexible explanations. Problematically, though, evolution is often seen as an end and an answer to all the questioning. But it is not that simple; it should be recognized that the question of the origin of life is not solely a scientific problem. This question has ramifications on various levels of human existence: religious, philosophical and social, and therefore needs to be considered on all these levels to be fully understood and appreciated. These areas of study should not be isolated areas in a school curriculum, but parts of an integrated whole with each contributing its own particular insight to make the picture complete. If this were so, there would be less conflict of interest and competition among the various viewpoints. This is possible only if the origin of life is taught from a broad perspective, and is not limited to the scientific analysis.

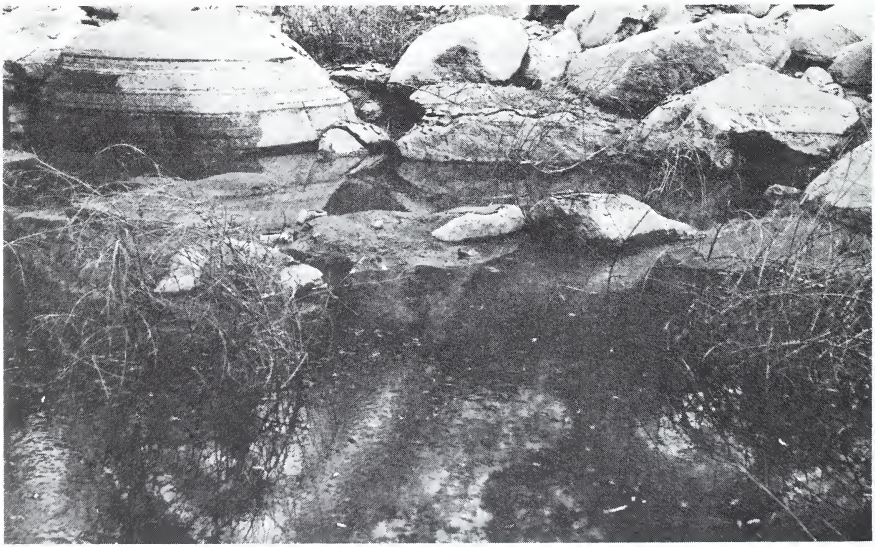
Regarding the material to be handled in textbooks, certain statements can be made. There must be a realization that the origin of life can be explained only in terms of *theories.* Obviously there are some theories that are more scientifically sound than others. This is true in the creation/evolution controversy. The role of the scientist is not that of the theologian. At the same time, seeing a phenomena from one angle does not negate another approach. The theory of special creation is a religious theory and is not based on scientific evidence. It holds that species arose through a supernatural act and possessed the same characteristics they now have. This theory is not backed by scientific evidence and cannot, therefore, be classified as a scientific explanation for the origin of life. I quote the *Los Angeles Times* Editorial of November 16, 1972:

> There is no place in any science textbook for any explanatory statement that is not 'scientifically valid,' that is not supported by evidence tested and proven by objective procedures. . . . Certainly science does not have all the facts nor are current theories immutable. But the point is that those beliefs are based on the best available and tested evidence.

Science does not deny the existence of a supernatural being, but studies man's physical development, making no attempt to explain the origin of his supernatural characteristics. This leaves the field open for the creational aspect of the origin of life. There is no need for a confrontation between faith and reason, but the objective handling of this complex question is necessary.

What should be taught regarding the origin of life? Evolution is the most scientifically substantiated theory and should therefore be part of the science curriculum. The creation theory is one based on philosophy rather than on tangible evidence, and is thus necessarily excluded from scientific treatment. It should, however, be incorporated into the philosophical, religious and sociological approaches to the mystery of life. Students should be exposed to the variety of explanations proposed and will thus come to realize that there is no simple answer to the question: What is life?

SR. MARIE PAUL GRECH, S.N.D.



Paper Bird

I remember waking up early one Saturday morning to a whooshing, banging wind that slammed screens and rattled the front door. As I curled cocoon-like under the warm covers, I felt gusts sneaking through cracks in the window frame. The aroma of perking coffee and frying bacon drifted in from the kitchen. I hopped out of bed and ran to the kitchen fighting off the shivers. I knew Mom would have opened the oven door to warm up the kitchen. She smiled down at me as I hurried to the oven. "Did you hear the storm last night?" she asked. "It rained all night and the wind even blew open the front door!" I hadn't heard anything. Secretly disappointed to have missed the excitement, I sat and watched her skillfully separate the thick, fatty slices of bacon before they shriveled into short greasy curls. The coffee was perking in the glass pot. I watched with fascination as the swirling water changed from amber to deep chocolate and pumped its way up the thin basket stem. Bang! An angry gust slapped the back door. It rattled and shivered. I scrambled to the window to look outside.

The wind had scoured away yesterday's overcast and rinsed the sky blue. The mountains were clearly visible, every angle and curve sharpened by the brilliant sky. Rain-scrubbed rooftops were steaming. I thought they were on fire at first. The night wind had scattered millions of live oak leaves over lawns and gutters. Even now, a sudden whoosh would send more of them skipping down the street.

It was too beautiful just to look at! I had to get outside. I dressed quickly, throwing on an old coat and slipping on my scuffed uniform school shoes. I was thinking of the red kite my brothers had bought the day before. I knew this was the right day! I tore through the kitchen, slammed the back door behind me and rushed out into the wind.

My three brothers were already assembling the huge dime store kite. They were kneeling on the garage floor, hunched over a mess of string, balsa wood and paper. I squeezed in to watch and listen to the experts.

"Don't rip the paper!"

"It won't tear!"

"You have to bend the cross bow a little more."

"Not too much! Take it easy!"

Slowly the paper kite was taking shape. It was almost finished when someone remembered the tail. They sent me in to find old rags. Finally the kite was ready for take-off.

The boys took turns running with it down the middle of the street. I kept a lookout for cars. The boys sped down the runway a hundred times, but the wind refused to pick up the kite. The gusts were too weak and short to give it a good boost. Discouraged, the kite fliers took a break.

"Let me try it now," I begged. I had been hoping for such a chance.

"O.K. But don't let it get caught in those trees," they warned me.

I clutched the ball of string tightly in my fist and started to run as fast as I could. The wind rushed and roared through my ears, stung my cheeks, and sent the blood racing and tingling inside me. The string was slipping quickly through my fingers. I could feel the kite fighting the wind through the pulsing string. My heart was hammering loudly. I knew the kite was up! As I turned my wind blurred eyes to look, the kite began to toss and spin madly. "Watch out for the phone lines! Hey! It's gonna hit the tree!" The boys were on their feet. The kite cartwheeled over and over until it hit the street, crumpled and bent.

I had broken the kite – and they probably wouldn't let me try it again! A big lump swelled up in my throat. I tried to fight back the tears, but they managed to slip out anyway. "It's ok! Don't cry. We can fix it," they assured me.

By the time the kite was repaired, the wind had grown very strong. "Here. You can try it again. Just one more time!" The string was thrust into my hand. They held the kite upright while I turned to start the takeoff. I pushed myself against the rushing wall of wind with all of my strength. I pumped my legs as hard and fast as I could. A sharp pain shot deep through my throat each time I opened it to the brisk air. The string speeled out faster and faster through my fingers! I turned my head. A giant current had swept up our paper bird at last! The flight was good! The cardboard spun madly in my wind chapped hands as the wind whisked the red kite up into the blue sky. It swiftly drifted higher and farther away.

The wind put a powerful energy into that thin paper kite. It seemed to be alive. I could feel a tremendous strength pulling and tugging in resistance to my tight hold. I was sure that it would get away from me. Somehow, it wasn't a dime store kite any more. It was some wild, captive creature straining to be freed of its leash.

The boys added another ball of string to the line. The paper bird snatched it up and flew higher and higher. Its rag tail and diamond shaped body grew smaller as it frisked and bobbed through the sky.

Just before sundown, the wind began to blow hard and cold. It wrestled fiercely with the oaks while their shadows struggled with each other on the lawn. Our own shadows grew tall and thin and soon disappeared with the sun.

It was getting dark now. My wild adventurous paper bird now looked very lonely and small in the darkening sky. Slowly, the boys reeled the string in. The red bird fought them all the way down. When it finally landed, I picked it up. It was cold and damp. It wasn't a wild bird any more – just an ordinary red paper kite with a tattered rag tail. It looked so flat and stiff. I felt sad, but I didn't know why.

I suddenly noticed how cold and uncomfortable I had become. My cold-stiffened hands ached from fighting the pulling string. My eyes and nose were running. I didn't feel warm and tingly inside any more. I was cold all over–down to my toes. I picked up the kite and turned slowly to the house. The yellow windows glowed warmly in the dark. I ran the rest of the way until I was safe inside the cozy kitchen.

MARGARET ANTCZAK

CARMEN YANEZ

CARMEN YANEZ

The Carnival

The carnival came to our town on the first day of summer vacation. It rode in late at night to help us celebrate our days of freedom. It was a tradition among us children not to go anywhere near the empty street where they set up the tents until they officially opened at six that evening. Not one of us ever missed that first night.

I woke up early, as if the school bells rang, but lay in bed for hours before going down to breakfast. I would continue to do that all summer long. This morning, I was counting the pennies in my bank. Last summer the carnival gave away giant suckers as prizes when you threw a baseball and knocked down all three milk bottles. I had been practicing throwing baseballs and saving pennies all year. After I had counted my money three times and was satisfied I'd win a sucker before I ran out of money, I went downstairs.

Grandma smiled at me and put cereal and fruit in front of me.

"Glad you could sleep in," she said, "I never could when I was your age."

I smiled. I knew that Gran held breakfast for me because she knew I was up there awake. I always seemed to get to the table before she gave up and put breakfast away. I ate slowly trying to decide what I was going to do all day until six.

"Why don't you go play with Mary Ann, dear?" Gran suggested.

"Can't," I replied. "She went into Millsberg with her Mom."

"How about Sally Lee?" she tried again.

"No, too far."

"Why don't you just go outside and find something to do? The berries need watering."

"Gran?"

"Yes."

"Grandma, I need a pet."

"Now, honey . . . "

"No, really, Grandma. That's what I need. A puppy or rabbit or something. I need a pet for when everyone else is busy."

"Play with Charlie."

"That old mutt. He's too old to do anything. I need a pet to play with."

"No, and that's it. I don't intend to feed a mouth that don't earn its keep. Now those berries need watering."

As I tried to think of another attack Grandma gave me a gentle push out the door. "Honey, I have to bake and I can't with you under foot."

In silence I went outside. I always felt strange the first few days of vacation. I never knew what to do with myself. I didn't want to do anything; after all, it

was vacation, and yet after nine months of school I felt guilty if I wasn't busy. I just needed a few days for the guilt to rub off. I was sure the carnival would help.

I pulled the garden hose around to Grandma's berry patch and started to water. I looked around the garden and admitted I was a good gardener.

Grandma leaned out the kitchen window. "You watchin' out what you doing?" she asked.

I jumped, startled and looked at the flood I had made at one end of the berry patch. I smiled at Grandma.

"Got your mind on that circus, I'll bet. It happens every year at the same time, I know that look, but, honey, water the other end. Those berries need water, too."

"Yes, Gran," I replied and turned to the opposite end of the patch with the hose. As I watered I tried to think of a way around Grandma. I wanted a pet more than anything else, even the giant sucker I was going to win this evening.

When I got tired of watering, I turned the hose off and went inside. "Gran, most pets do earn their keep. It would just depend on what we got. Take a dog, he would be a great watch dog. And a rabbit would just eat greens. Please, Gran."

"Honey, it's not that and you know it! You just aren't old enough. You are not responsible. Remember that fish we had – you never fed it, never changed the water, and that was just last summer. You only do your chores half the time. I don't mind, you have got time to grow up, but I will not have you harming a poor animal. When you are responsible enough for a pet, we'll see that you get one. OK, honey?"

"Sure, Gran." I knew I didn't have a chance for a revote.

"Now you go out and play. But don't go too far or get in trouble."

"Yes, Gran," I said and followed the worn path to our faded white fence a few yards out. I sat on the fence swinging my legs and scraping my feet on the ground, something Grandma disapproved of, till Mary Ann walked by.

"Hey, you back already?"

"Yeah, but no candy." We sat in silent sorrow. A trip to town without coming home with a bag of candy was a wasted trip to our way of thinking.

"Let's do something. I know, let's climb the apple trees in Mrs. O'Henry's orchard."

"Can't. Mom said one more complaint from Mrs. O'Henry and I'll be in trouble. How about swimming in the lake?" Mary Ann suggested.

"OK." And we spent the rest of the morning in the lake. Mary Ann and I talked about the carnival while we swam.

"Think you'll win a sucker this year?" Mary Ann asked.

"I sure hope so. I counted my pennies this morning and I'll keep trying 'till I do win something. Maybe they'll have something new this year."

"I hope they have that ferris wheel. I thought that was the best ride they had!" Mary Ann said.

"I liked the side show with that man that did all those magic tricks," I said.

When I went home for lunch, Grandma was ironing me a dress to wear to the carnival. We laid out my clothes on my bed and I joined Gran out in the kitchen. She was making bread and I loved to lift the cloth to see if the dough had risen. Grandma gave me the first slice of the new loaf out of the oven. As I cut a second slice, she looked away. I wondered if she felt bad about the conversation about my pet. At dinner time, she placed a bowl of cut fruit in front of me.

"Now you eat that and get ready."

"That's dinner?" I asked.

"You wouldn't eat if I put a dinner in front of you, would you? I'll give you some change for a hot dog. That's what you are saving room for, anyway."

As I ate quickly, I wondered if Gran was a mind reader.

"I was a young girl once too," she said as if in answer.

About an hour later we were on our way to Mary Ann's house.

"Hey, hurry," I yelled at Mary Ann dressing in her room and in a few minutes we were all on our way. Mary Ann held one of Gran's hands and I held the other. We were so excited we almost pulled Gran all the way there.

When we got there, Gran gave us each a handful of change. I had my pocket full of pennies.

"Now that money has got to last you all night. If you get lost, find some folks you know and stay with them till you find me. Look for neighbors. I want you two to stay with each other and be good. You hear?"

Mary Ann and I heard the last word, nodded our heads and ran off in the direction of all the sounds and smells.

We raced past the booths of men shouting "Come one and all to see." I glanced quickly at them to see where the bottles were piled in front of the baseballs but I didn't see them. We walked slowly past the booth with food. The smell of butter and mustard dragged us to it, but the slow, rhythmic music of the next booth drew us there and the music won. We slowly edged between the crowded men to the music in front. A man and two slowly dancing girls attracted everyone's attention. The man explained that these were just two of ten beautiful women inside. Mary Ann and I looked at each other. We had never seen this booth before. It was something Grandma would not approve of but I reached into my pocket for the fifteen cents it cost to get in. It would mean not being able to go on three rides but I thought it would be worth it. We both got in the line going into the tent. When I was third in line and Mary Ann fourth, Grandma walked by. I wanted to duck so she wouldn't see me but I didn't want to lose my place. Before we could decide what to do Grandma had pulled us both out of line.

"What you two think you are doing in that line?" We just looked at her silently. "You were going to spend that money looking at almost undressed women. I don't believe you two. What did you want in there anyway? If I find you near here again, you two go straight home."

She stopped and looked at us silently. I looked at Mary Ann but she was looking at her shoes. After a long fierce look, Grandma walked away. I considered getting back in line until I recalled the paddle in the kitchen and the last time it had contacted me. We walked away glancing over our shoulders.

After I had gotten a hotdog and Mary Ann had some cotton candy, we settled down to business. Mary Ann looked at each booth before she returned and settled to the booth with boxes and balls. Even without our being good friends, I knew why she had picked that booth. In the shelves on the side stood dolls of all sizes and colors. Mary Ann was not much like me. She enjoyed dainty girl things. She was also lucky at games that involved boxes.

After ten tries and almost all her money, she got three balls in three boxes with the numbers adding up to eighteen. "We got a winner here. A nice sweet little girl just won a nice, sweet little doll. Come'n look! We've got a winner here!" the man inside the booth yelled.

Mary Ann blushed as the people stopped to look. The man walked to the shelf of dolls with real interest. "Let me see here," he said, "A nice pretty doll with I'd say a blue dress and blond hair." As he turned he noticed that the crowd had vanished leaving only the two of us. With his audience gone the man shoved the doll at Mary Ann. "Scram, kid."

Surprised at his change, Mary Ann missed the doll and it fell to the ground. I had seen her look before the doll fell—pure joy. But as she watched it fall, unable to think fast enough to save it, the tears started to fall. We looked at it crumpled on the ground, dirty, a long scratch on the side of its head.

But the mother instinct took over Mary Ann. "You poor baby. Did that man hurt you? Let mommy take care of you." She picked the doll up and held her tight.

After a few more minutes of walking around, I found the booth with the all-day suckers and the baseballs. I stood watching the teenage boys prove their skill with darts for several minutes before I got into line. As I did Mary Ann grabbed my arm. "Did you see what that boy got as a prize?" I turned to look and saw a tiny, furry white rabbit in a cage.

"Oh, Mary Ann, isn't he beautiful?"

Silent, I just nodded. Then I made a quick decision. I changed lines. Mary Ann followed, horrified.

"You can't do that. What will your Grandma say?"

I answered with a quick decision. "Grandma won't say anything if I win it. She can't make me give it back. And she didn't have to buy it so what could she say?"

"Plenty," said Mary Ann.

But it was too late. I was in front of the man laying down a handful of my pennies. I wasn't as good with darts as I was with baseballs. I found myself putting the money Grandma gave me down and taking the four darts. One . . . two . . . three . . . I had done it. The man pulled a small cage out from behind the curtain. I looked at my treasure and my heart went out to it, I felt like Mary Ann and her doll.

With both of us without money for the other games or the rides, we sat

in a far corner behind some boxes, cuddling our prizes. We were so wrapped up in our private worlds that when Grandma called, a few feet from us, we jumped. We waited until she had walked away and then jumped out from behind the boxes.

"Here we are, Gran," I shouted.

"I've been calling all over for you two. Any luck?" she asked and then caught sight of Mary Ann's doll. "What a pretty little thing," she said, overlooking the dirt and scratches. Then she realized the box behind my back. "Let's see, child." I smiled faintly as I pulled out my rabbit. Grandma frowned.

"Where did you get that?"

"I won it, Gran, it was my prize. I broke three balloons with four darts. I won it."

"You should not have taken it," she said as her eyes narrowed in anger.

"Not take it! But Grandma . . ."

"A pet is a pet whether it's a prize or not and we have already discussed pets."

She turned and started the long dark road home. Mary Ann followed commenting on the coldness and darkness but Grandma remained silent. I followed at a distance I thought was safe. But when Mary Ann went into her house I was alone with Grandma. I considered asking if I could spend the night with Mary Ann but decided against it almost at once. Grandmother was not in the mood. She was silent all the way home and remained silent until I was washed and in bed. She walked into my bedroom and sat at the edge of the bed until I finished my prayers. She sat looking at my prize in the corner until I had climbed into bed and pulled up the covers.

"It's wrong to go against my wishes," she started. "I thought you understood about the pet. I thought we agreed that you were not ready for a pet."

"You decided, not me."

I saw her start to get angry and I worried about what came next.

"Then you think you are ready for one?" I remained silent. "We'll see. You can keep the rabbit as long as you care for it. But once you forget, the rabbit goes, do you understand?"

I nodded.

"Then goodnight." She left the room without kissing me.

The following morning I woke to the quiet noise of little feet moving hay in the corner of my room. I sat up and looked around until I saw last night's prize in the corner. I ran to the corner and took it out of the cage. We played on the bed until I heard Grandma in the kitchen. I tried to be happy because she let me keep the rabbit but I couldn't forget that she didn't kiss me goodnight. I went downstairs and put the cage with my pet out on the back porch.

"What you goin' to call him?" Grandma asked.

I knew she was still mad so I thought it would help if I could get her to laugh.

"Is it a he?" I asked.

"If it isn't we keep her away from others. You remember what happened

to Karen's rabbit." We both giggled as we recalled.

Karen had gotten two rabbits the year before. After months of baby rabbits that they couldn't sell, she gave the mother and babies away making no money at all. Karen kept the father as a pet only to find that she had kept "Mommy" and there were more babies on the way.

Grandma giggled for a few seconds but then got serious.

"You must clean out the cage every other day," she said. "You must feed him every night, and most important, he must always have clean water and be kept in the shade. You understand?"

I nodded. "I think I'll take out a book on rabbits next time Mrs. Elm comes with the library," I said. Grandma looked a little happier.

After breakfast, I took my rabbit to the empty, grassy land next to the house. I decided to call him "George" and tried to teach George to trust me and eat out of my hand. I was getting a bit frustrated when Mary Ann came by.

"I was looking for you. Guess what?"

"Dunno"

"Dumb Alicia, she won twenty-five cents last night."

"You're kiddin' " I exclaimed.

"Nope, and she is going to the store in town to spend it. We all going to make sure she spends it right. Come on."

I put George in his cage and locked it. I put my sweater next to the cage and ran off. Mary Ann and I caught up with Alicia and pointed out the advantages to buying something she would share with us.

"You don't want to be called selfish, do you?" we asked.

"Well, I won it, you know."

"We know. But friends share things," Mary Ann explained.

"We'll share what we won last night with you if you're nice."

"What did you win last night?" she asked.

Mary Ann explained. "I won the most beautiful, beautiful doll. She is the prettiest I've ever seen. And I'll let you borrow her for your baby, if you want."

Almost convinced, Alicia turned to me. "And what'd you get last night?"

I started to tell her about George, when I remembered where I had left him in the sun with hardly any water. I turned away and stopped walking.

"She got a rabbit, she won, at home." Mary Ann said proudly.

I turned and started to run back to the field.

"Where you goin'? Mary Ann called.

"Got to get George," I explained.

"You'll miss the treat Alicia'll buy."

I stopped for a second, "I got to get George," and ran.

By the time I got to the field I was tired. I had a sharp pain in my right side so I stopped to rest. I could see George in the distance. After a few minutes of rest I started to get up. Then I saw Grandma coming across the field. I wondered if I could get to George without her seeing me but I waited a minute too long. She had seen George. As she walked over to the cage I sat down on the ground and buried my head in my lap. I cried silently with my head down staring at my jeans. After a few minutes, I raised my head and Grandma and George were

gone. I started to think that Grandma had saved George but I could hear her saying "You're just not responsible enough for a pet."

I walked slowly across the field towards home. "I'm sorry. Honest," I cried to the trees.

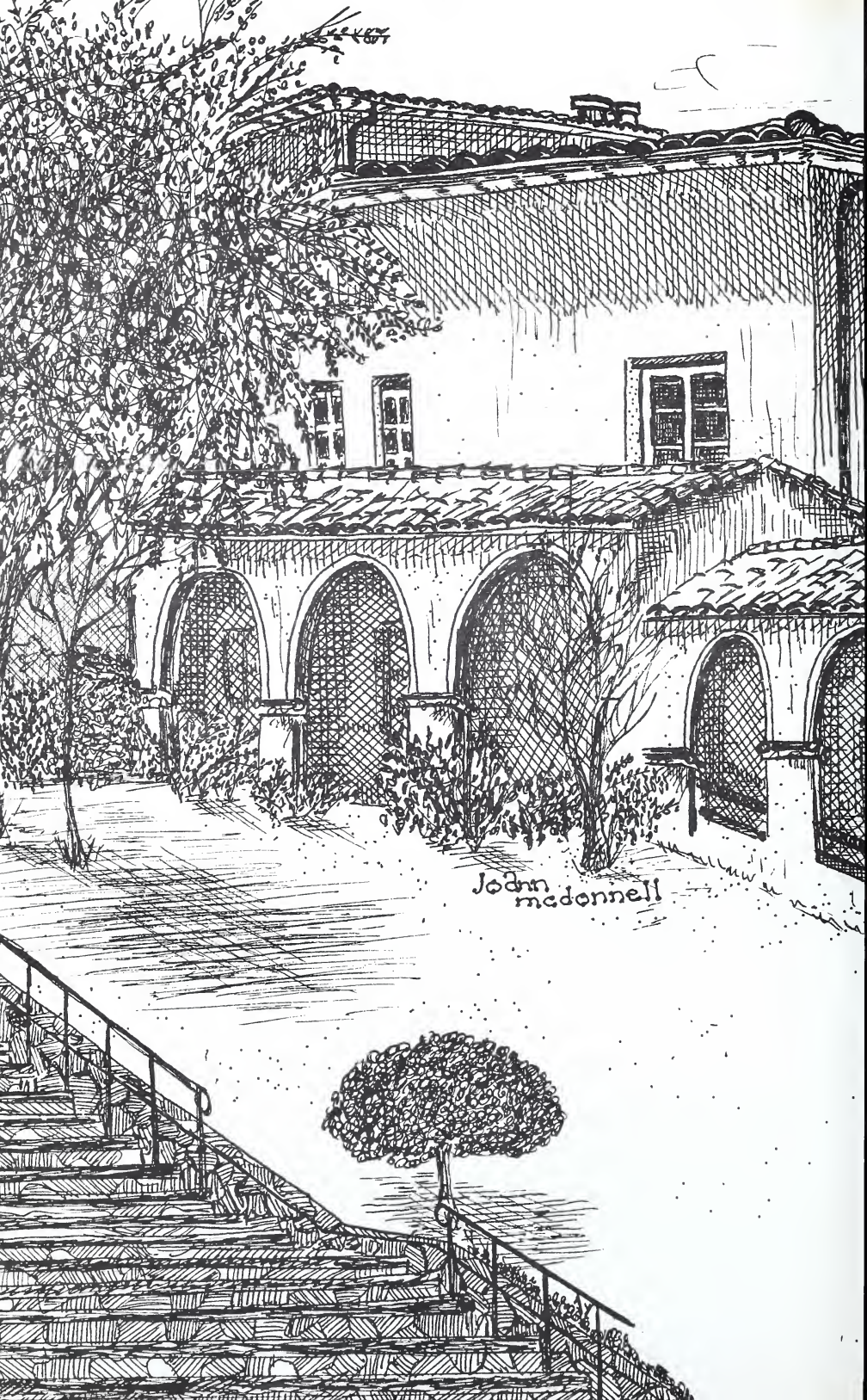
As I walked across the field I heard the noise of tiny feet moving in the hay. I looked and there to the left in the shade of the tree sat George's cage. And his cup was filled with water.

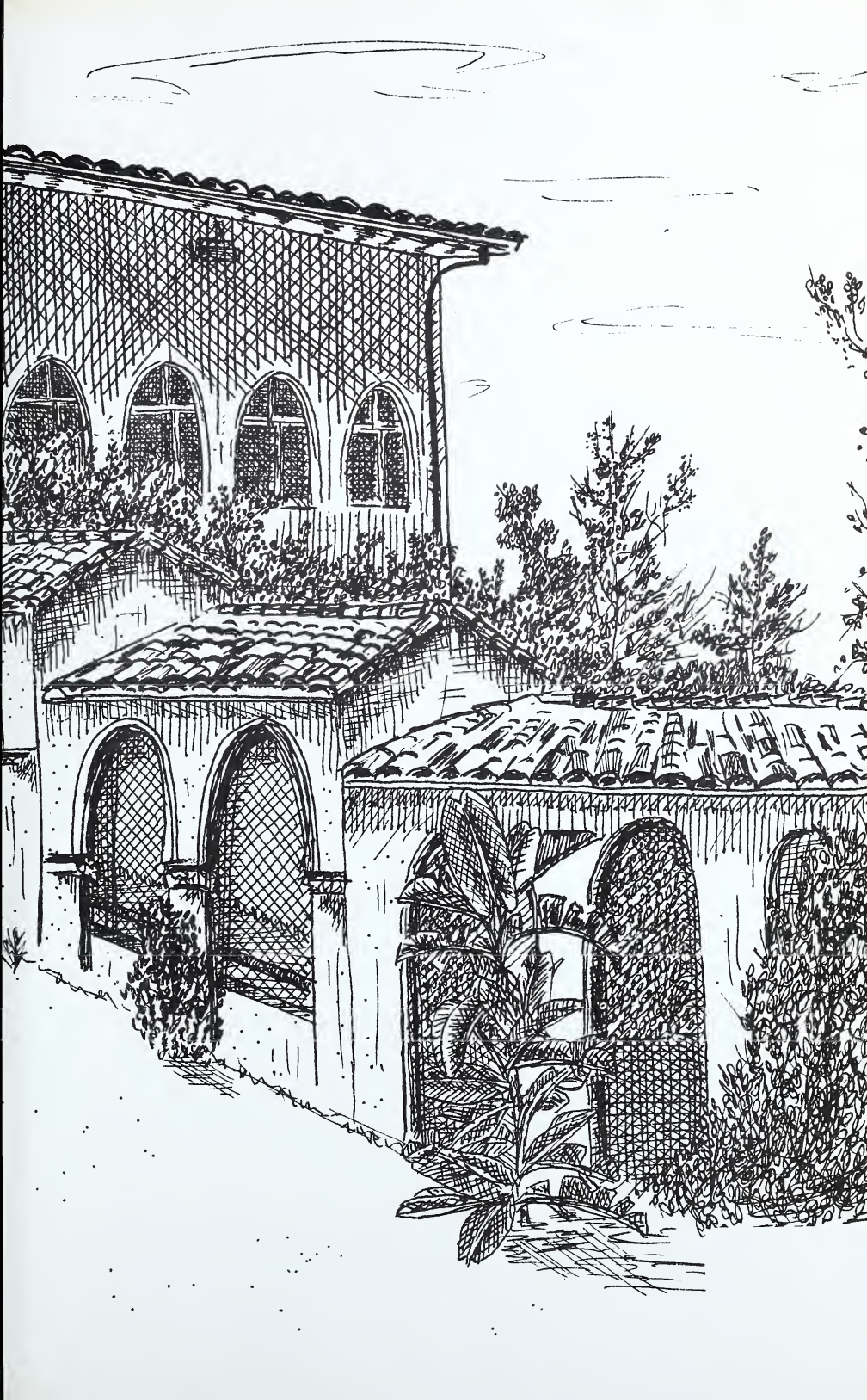
I laughed with relief as I picked up his cage and talked to him all the way home. I walked in and saw my sweater on the kitchen chair.

"I saw that left out in the field. You be more careful, you hear? That's a right nice sweater," Grandma said.

I ran to her and hugged her tightly.

EVE MOBLEY


JoAnn
mcdonnell



Interlude

Kelly disgustedly eyed the clock for the fifth time in as many minutes. After wondering why in the name of heaven she was still waking up at six, she rolled over several times, attempting to free her body, now entangled by a rumpled sheet. I thought high school graduates were entitled to some sleep during summer vacation, she grumbled as the elusive sheet ended up in a heap at the foot of the bed. Throwing the sheet on the floor in disgust. Kelly settled back onto her pillow and smacked her head on the wall. God, it must be a plot, Kelly muttered, ruefully rubbing her head. Oh, damn, I forgot about Trish.

"Hey, Trisha! It's time to get up for school." Kelly stuck a foot out and not too gently kicked Trish's bed. Trish buried her head in the pillow. "You're gonna be late for band if you don't get up." She began pulling the blanket off Trish's bed. "Trish, if you're not up in five minutes, I'm going to sick Barney on you." Trish's right eye opened a crack, and Kelly yanked the blanket off her bed entirely. "You know how St. Bernards love to slobber on sleeping bodies." Trish hurriedly sat up, banging her head on the shelf above her bed. Kelly threw the rolled-up blanket in Trish's face. "Ah, I knew you'd see my way."

"I didn't realize a high school diploma gave you a license to harass your younger sister, Kelly Greer." She yawned loudly and glanced around the room, looking for her uniform blouse. She retrieved it from underneath her tennis shoes. "God, I don't know if I can stand going to that lousy band practice again."

"Don't swear. Well, you've lasted this long. It's only a few more days."

"Easy for you to say; you got out of it second semester."

"I had a class."

"Yeah, that conveniently met at the same time as band."

"You're just jealous."

"You're damn right!"

"Trish!"

"Oh, I mean *darn* right." Picking up one shoe, Trish tried to untie the knot in the shoelace without much success. "Mr. Tanner is such a jerk, I can't believe it." The mistreated shoelace broke and Trish threw it at Kelly. It traveled about two feet and landed on top of her other shoe. "He's always having us play those same lousy marches over and over." Trish shuffled through a pile of clothes and into the bathroom. She turned the faucet on with too much force, splashing water all over her blouse. "I especially hate that crummy theme from Peer Gynt Suite. It's his favorite and we must play it at least twelve times a week." She hung a dripping washcloth on top of a dry towel and raced towards the kitchen, going down the stairs two at a time. "You know, I think I hate classical music as much as I despise Mr. Tanner. Yuck!"

"Don't be vulgar, Trish." Kelly came down to the kitchen at a more leisurely pace. "You know, I have this sneaking suspicion that you don't like the guy."

"Funny, Kelly, that's really funny."

"I kind of liked Mr. Tanner. I guess I just couldn't hack getting up at six every morning so I'd be on time." Kelly yawned loudly. "That's almost as early as nuns get up. Man, I could never be a nun." She wrapped a dishtowel around her head like a veil and folded her hands with mock piety. "I'd get kicked out for sleeping through Mass and Vespers or whatever those prayers are they say."

"Listen, you'd never last in a convent because you have to be nice all the time. You'd cause too much trouble."

Kelly twirled the dishtowel around and snapped it at Trish's legs. "Come on, cut all this garbage and finish getting ready for school. I promised mom I'd take care of you while she and dad were gone."

"Susie Homemaker strikes again."

Boy, I thought I'd never get Trish off this morning, Kelly mused as she straightened things up in the kitchen. God, this place is an absolute mess. Man, I can't wait till mom gets back home. I'm just not cut out for this. After clearing off the dining room table, Kelly began setting out things for dinner. The courtyard gate clanged and Trish bounded through the door, shedding herself of books, sweater, and flute at various intervals along the way.

"Trish, don't put your books on the table. I'm trying to keep things picked up." Kelly pulled a can of pork and beans out of the cupboard and set it on the sink. "How come you brought your tootie flutie home? Don't tell me you're actually going to practice?"

Trish sauntered into the kitchen and poured herself a glass of milk. "Kelly, how'd you like a knuckle sandwich?"

"My, aren't we tough today. You must've had a really great time in band this morning."

"The old geezer didn't even show up. That stuffed shirt Glenn Collins directed us instead. Now I know why he plays trumpet so well--he has an abundance of hot air stored inside."

"You still haven't told me why you brought your flute home."

"Mr. Tanner left a message that he wants us to practice Peer Gynt Suite for tomorrow."

"I bet you were thrilled."

"Yeah. In fact, I'm so thrilled I'm not even going to play it at all."

"How about a flute and trombone duet?"

"Oh, come on, Kelly! You can't play that trombone worth beans. It sounds like an elephant's mating call whenever you blow on that thing. And besides, I'm not playing that dumb song any more than I have to, especially since it's his favorite."

"You know, Trish, you really shouldn't be saying all these unkind things about Mr. Tanner."

"Well, look who's talking, Sister Kelly herself." Trish planted her feet in

disgust. "I didn't notice you being remarkably Christian towards your English teacher last semester. What was it you said about him? Oh, yeah. 'His lectures bring new meaning to the word 'drivel.' "

"Well, at least I didn't call him an old geezer or a jerk."

"You don't have to. I'll do it next year when I have him again."

"You are hopeless, Trish, absolutely hopeless. You know, if God had any faults, you'd be the first to find them."

Trish bounded up the stairs and into the room, slamming the door behind her. Picking her books up off the table, Kelly threw them upstairs, one at a time, hitting the bedroom door with great accuracy. Trish reappeared.

"Hey, cut it out, you creep!"

"Well, take your dumb books upstairs with you next time."

"You know, Kelly, your lease is almost up." She came out of the room and sat on the top stair, "Mom and dad and I only took you on a trial basis and if you don't watch it, we're going to send you back to the factory."

"Dammit, Trish, not only are you a slob, you've got a mouth like Don Rickles." Kelly advanced a few stairs. "No wonder mom and dad went for a few days—they had to get away from the tough tongue of Trisha Greer."

"Man, that's the only way to survive the weirdos I'm surrounded by."

Kelly sat down halfway up the staircase. "Well, you weren't always such a toughie. I remember when you were in grammer school, you used to cry over the least little thing."

"All in the past, birdbrain, all in the past."

"And when our first puppy died, you cried for two weeks. Now you're as thick-skinned as a rhinoceros."

"Look, man, that's the only way to be when I have to put up with jerks like Mr. Tanner and dummies like you."

"Snot."

"Well, it's up to the intelligent minority of which I am one, to save people from themselves."

"Move over, Jesus, here comes St. Trish."

Kelly finally ushered her sister out the door the next morning with great difficulty. Trish had fallen back asleep three times in ten minutes and Kelly barely got her up in time to make it to band at 7:30. Boy, am I glad summer's here. Then maybe Trish will stop talking about Mr. Tanner and how much she hates him. Kelly began washing the dishes, checking the clock from time to time so that the noise of Trish's arrival home wouldn't catch her with a plate in midair. Coming around the breakfast bar to wipe the table. Kelly caught a glimpse of Trish slowly disappearing up the stairs.

"Boy, that was the quietest entrance you've ever made. Kinda nice, though. Say, how was band? Today was the last day, wasn't it?" Kelly walked to the foot of the stairs in time to see Trish close the door to their room behind her. She started climbing the stairs. "So, how was Mr. Tanner today? Loads of fun, I bet," Kelly walked into the room and noticed some music on Trish's bed. "Whatever do you have the music to Peer Gynt Suite up here for? I thought you didn't like it." Trish sat on her bed, shaking a bit. "Trish, what's the matter? Hey, turn around and look at me." Trish's voice trembled in reply.

"Mr. Tanner's dead, Kelly."

"Oh, Trish, no! What happened!"

"He had a heart attack yesterday morning. That's why he wasn't at band." She tried to keep the tears away by biting the corner of her bottom lip. Kelly moved hesitantly towards Trish, who now stared out the closed window.

"Trish, it's not your fault."

"That doesn't make me feel any better." Trish turned her face towards Kelly as her eyes again began filling with tears. Kelly sat down on the bed beside her and awkwardly put an arm around her shoulders. Trish's face crumpled. "Oh, Kelly, if only I hadn't . . . if only I hadn't."

JUDY FITZPATRICK

Such an Old Man

Often from the cliffs I watch
the restless waves wrap cold rocks,
as if each were grasping for life
impossible,
while the ocean sucks each captive back
into his massive lungs.

I see an old man
there, living within,
breathing each wave,
beckoning innocent men to come
sleep within his deep black heart.

He must be a very wise man
for it is said the older, the wiser.
He has been here a long time.

I wonder how much he knows?

I wonder
how much longer he has to live?

TERESA CIPOLLA

CARMEN YANEZ

1970

Beside the streams of Babylon
we sat and wept at the memory
of Zion.

Pressing her hands against the marble, Terry let the tears flow freely onto the hot cement.

"We lost, Judy. They let him go."

Terry felt the rage build once more inside, but unlike an hour ago, she let the sobs rack her body freely. There was no one around now, no one to see her sorrow. No one to look at her with indifferent pity. Slowly, as if in great pain, Terry tilted back her head, looked up and read the plaque once more: Judith Gardner, 1946-1970.

"God, Jude, I miss you. I just want to see you laugh. It's hard getting used to being six Gardners instead of seven, so help us now, okay Jude?" Pulling out the wet, crumpled handkerchief, Terry wiped her nose, took a deep breath and started across the cemetery toward her car.

"See ya later, Judy," she whispered.

The sun was strong for mid-October. The leaves had already been gathered and burned, but the valley was having an unexpected heat wave. Driving home, Terry leaned over and opened the car window on the passenger side. The gust of air felt refreshing even though it was warm. Her thoughts drifted back to the trial: not guilty. The verdict rang over and over in her mind . . . not guilty, not guilty.

"I hope you burn in hell, you ba-. . .!" Terry stopped. Her sudden outburst had surprised her.

Hey, what's the matter with you? she thought. This isn't like you. Grab hold of yourself. The feeling of rage and the want for revenge was new to Terry. The desire to strike back at the boy whose speeding truck crushed the life from Judy haunted Terry. She shuddered.

As she pulled into the driveway, Terry spotted the red MG she and Judy had driven the hell out of on their Sunday rides into the country.

Love thy neighbor as thyself. Turn the other cheek . . . . forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

How can I? How *can* I? He lied. He said that he ran the red light when the accident happened, but then at the trial he said he didn't remember saying any such thing. He lied! Hey, God, he *lied!*

"Oh, Terry, I'm glad you're home. I was beginning to worry about you."

"I . . . I took my car to the twenty-five cent car wash. The ole bug was filthy." Terry did not want her mother to know she had been out to the cemetery. She couldn't bear to hear her mother's agonized silence.

"You know, I wish you'd get rid of that Volkswagon. Maybe if Judy wasn't in a VW, maybe she'd still be . . . "

Terry's mind flashed back to something her father had told her a few weeks ago:

"The coroner's report said that your sister had died instantly. Her head hit against the doorpost as she was thrown out of the car. The postman who witnessed the accident said the impact was so forceful, she bounced across the road like a football. A *football!"* The image hit Terry, jolting her into cursing the boy once more, but again it was her mother's voice which brought her back to reality.

"If, if, if. The world is full of if's."

"Yeah, well we'll see. You worry too much, ya ol lady," Terry teased. "Come on, what's for dinner?"

"Ifits."

"What's ifits?"

"If it all goes around you'll get some!"

"Ha, ha, very funny."

"Set the table, will you, Terry?"

"Okay." Terry followed her mother into the kitchen. The air-conditioned house felt good. She thought how cruel it was to see her mother and father turn grey. How, in the last couple of months, they seemed to have lost hope.

As she filled the six glasses with ice, Terry thought back to the conversation she and her parents had had the other night:

"Why did such a horrible thing have to happen to us? Haven't we been good Catholic parents?" her mother questioned.

"What did we do wrong in God's eyes to have Jude taken from us? Why did the courts set *him* free?"

"Dad, mom, stop! Jude has found peace. Everywhere you look there are people running around with signs that have 'Peace' written on them. They don't have the foggiest notion of what real peace is all about. No one does, and no one will until they die. I think that mankind will always be restless, always be like the caged panther pacing back and forth, waiting. Waiting for something, someone to set it free. For the panther it's having the bars taken away, for man it's death. Death sets us free, takes away the cage of our bodies, and lets us live with God and with each other at ease and at peace."

"Don't forget to give everyone a napkin." Startled, Terry dropped the silverware that was in her hand. "Oops. Sorry 'bout that, chief."

The rest of the evening passed smoothly until Terry lay in bed. She knew the desire for revenge was still there inside of her. Each time she looked at her father's absent stare or her mother's empty arms, Terry could feel the savage, primitive rage kindle. She tossed . . .

Vengeance is mine says the Lord.

"I want him punished *now;* I want him to *suffer;* I want him to hurt."

The least you do to your brother you do unto me.

"I don't care, I *hate* him."

Love thy neighbor as thyself.

"No!"

If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing.

"So what? I don't give a damn!"

If I have faith in all its fullness to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing. Nothing . . . nothing . . . nothing.

Terry jerked up and sat staring into the darkness. The air seemed to hang on her shoulders. Her body was dripping with sweat, and her chest heaved with every breath she took. Silently she slipped out of bed, tiptoed into the kitchen and out the back door. The night breeze touched her, softly cooling her body as it ruffled her nightgown. Terry lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply, then let the smoke escape through her mouth and nose. The night was still and the rays of the moon rippled across the pool.

Raising her eyes quietly to the stars, Terry spoke:

"I believe Lord, help my unbelief."

FRANCES RUTH

Today

I slept
blanketed in
your words of comfort
but woke to find
my blanket turned to stone.
You had placed
each word upon
another
to make between us
this wall of stone.
I cried.
But you used my tears
to wet cement
between your stone words.
And I, not knowing
the strength of walls,
waited.

EVE MOBLEY

Nude Forest

Autumn's bright dress lay
scattered about the ankles
of her naked trees.

SHARON ROSE

Limerick

There was a young man at the zoo
Who seemed to have lost his left shoe.
He went into a rage
When he saw in a cage
His shoe, being chewed by a gnu.

SR. MARY JUDITH DIETERLE, S.S.L.

Naïveté

A girl who is learning to write
Might find it at first a great fight.
She thinks she will please
Her teacher with ease
Till she gets back a paper marked trite.

JUDY FITZPATRICK

Nocturnal Visitors

"What's that weird sound?"

"What weird sound?"

"Listen. You'll hear it."

"I don't hear anything."

"Then you're not listening right."

"Well, what does it sound like?"

"Like . . . like a flying saucer."

"How do you know what a flying saucer sounds like?"

"I saw it in the movies."

"Oh. Well, I still don't hear anything."

There was silence in the cramped bedroom as my sister and I lay in our bunkbeds listening with our imaginations.

"Susie?"

"Yeah?"

"I hear it now. It does sound like a flying saucer."

That did it. Now I was really scared. I had been hoping that I was just imagining the strange sound that seemed to come from somewhere out back, but if Jan heard it too . . . I mean, after all, she was two whole years older than me and she'd had a lot more practice hearing things.

"Where do you suppose they are?"

"They probably landed behind the Allisons."

"Yeah, there's that big field back there. Wonder if they burnt a circle of grass like they did in the movie?"

"I don't know but we can check tomorrow."

"Why don't you look out and see if you can see any of their lights? Flying saucers always have flashing lights, mostly red and green, I think."

"Why don't you look?"

"No. You're closer."

"But you're in the top bunk so you can see better."

"Yeah, but . . . . "

"You're chicken!"

"Am not!"

"Am so!"

"Am not!"

"Then you look and see. You're the expert."

Reluctantly I crept to the opposite end of my bed. We had it all planned out. Jan slept with her head by the window so she could warn me if a burglar or murderer should crawl in. I, on the other hand, slept with my head near the

door where I could keep an eye on our parents and make sure they weren't sneaking any goodies after the kids were in bed.

I started to pray that the bed would fall on top of Jan and in the excitement she would forget to make me look out the window at what I was sure was going to be a horrible sight. I bounced up and down a little just to give God a hand.

"Quit jumping around and hurry up."

"I am, I am. Don't rush me."

Hesitantly I stretched a trembling hand out to the venetian blinds. I took a deep breath and moved them to one side. My eyes widened in horror. I tried to scream but nothing came out. Jan, sensing the tension, called my name. I didn't hear her. All my attention was focused on the sight before me. Impatiently Jan called me again. This time the sound of her voice penetrated my stunned brain. I blinked my senses back and began to breathe normally once more. I let the blinds slide back in place. I was sure I had almost died of a heart attack at the age of nine from seeing my own terrified reflection in the window.

"What is it? What did you see?"

"Nothing," I said as I retreated to the safety of the other end of the bed. "Nothing at all."

"Too bad. I guess they must've turned the lights out so the police couldn't find them."

"I guess so."

"I wonder if they're from Mars or Venus?"

"Mars, probably. I bet they're green."

"Why?"

"Spacemen are always green."

"Oh. I think they're supposed to have antennas, too."

"What's that?"

"These little things that stick out of their head so they can get good reception, like on a radio."

"Do you suppose they were listening to Science Fiction Theater, too?"

"I don't know."

We were silent as we tried to imagine thousands of little green men wandering around the neighborhood. It was a creepy feeling and we didn't much care for it.

"What are we going to do when they start to climb in the window?"

"Scream, I guess. You want me to come up and keep you company?"

"No, you'd better stay down there so we know when they get here."

"What if they have ray guns and shoot us? Or maybe they're real smart and can fix it so we don't even know that they're here."

Jan would have to think of something like that. I was beginning to feel a definite lack of security.

We began to make plans for the almost certain takeover of the neighborhood, whispering fast and furious, when something suddenly blocked the doorway. We fell silent and scrunched under our covers trying to look inconspicuous. But it was only Mom. We peeked out at her from eyes that tried unsuccessfully to look just awakened.

"Girls."

"Hum? Huh?"

"What's all the whispering about?"

"Whispering?"

"You heard me."

"Oh, we were just talking. You know how it is."

We were both wondering if and how we should break the news to her. These things have to be done very carefully. Grownups often got hysterical when faced with such a situation. Then again they didn't always believe kids right away. Just look at the time it took me fifteen whole minutes to convince Mom, who was in the middle of giving a baby shower, that Jan really did have her finger stuck in the rootbeer can. Just as we had almost decided to warn her of the immediate danger, the sound came again. Jan's and my eyes met in the mirror. This could be tricky. All kids know how adults mess things up.

"What's the weird noise?"

"I don't know. We heard it a little while ago, too."

"Don't you think it kinda sounds like a flying saucer?"

Mom looked at us thoughtfully and seemed to give the matter some thought. You'd think a flying saucer landed in our back yard every day.

"No," she said decisively. "No, I think it sounds more like the new Captain Fury Space Whistle that Mark Zable got today."

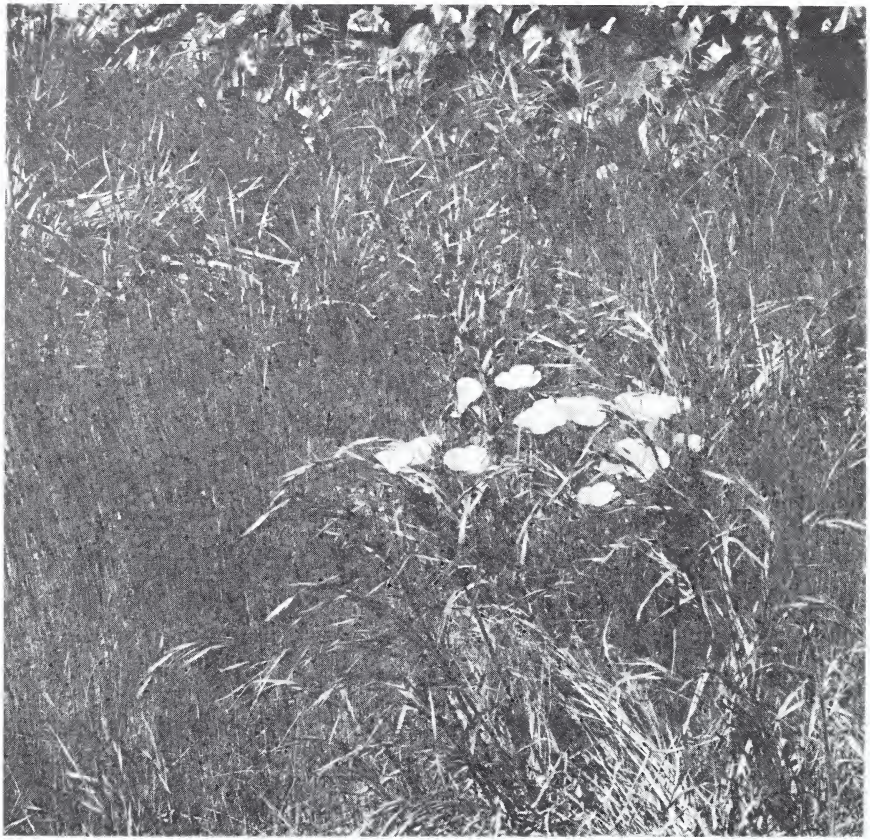
The Zables and their five runny-nosed kids lived in the other half of our duplex. Mark and his brother shared the bedroom next to ours. Now as we listened more carefully the noise did seem to be coming from behind our dresser. Mom's suspicions were confirmed by Mrs. Zable as if on cue.

"Mark Robert Zable! You give me that confounded whistle and get to sleep. Don't you know that there are people trying to sleep around here?"

"Well, I guess you two don't have to worry about that any more. Try to get to sleep, girls, it's way past your bedtime."

Relieved and yet a little disappointed, I snuggled up in the security of my blankets. Mom was so cool. She never made fun of us or even teased us too much. She was really all right. For an adult, that is. On the other hand, what did she know about flying saucers? Maybe there wasn't one this time but who knows what may happen tomorrow? Just to be on the safe side, I started to plan an escape route as I drifted off to sleep. After all, you can't be too careful when you're dealing with flying saucers.

SHARON CRISS



CARMEN YANEZ

Poppy

a tear
or
a raindrop
held
by
a
string
gently, growing
outer walls
to a cup.
Or rounded hands
lying back
open and mellow orange
broken parasols play in the wind.

MICHELLE GERGEN

POET/TEACHER:
The Letters of Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe

To read the London letters of Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe between 1912 and 1916 is to be allowed to enter the mind of a brilliant living teacher. Playful in his grimmest hours, serious when lightest, he is profane and reverent, absolutely informal and literate. Whether he speaks of America, of Imagism, of the poets he taught and loved, or of *Poetry Magazine,* one cannot miss his meaning or fail to respect it.

The relationship between Pound and Monroe grew out of his interest in an idea she conceived for an American magazine of poetry which would provide a creative environment previously nonexistent for new voices. This new medium, Monroe hoped, would spark a "Renaissance."

To provide this medium she had to insure its financial and artistic integrity: she contacted some American millionaires who agreed to subsidize the magazine for five years, and through the summer months of 1912 she researched all the verse in American and English magazines of the previous five years. To the poets she thought interesting, she sent a circular which said they would be offered

> A chance to be heard in their own place, without the limitations imposed by the popular magazine . . . . while the ordinary magazines must minister to a large public little interested in poetry, this magazine will appeal to, and it may be hoped, will develop a public primarily interested in poetry as an art, the highest, most complete human expression of truth and beauty.[1]

Among the poets receiving the circular was Ezra Pound, a young American exile living in London, whose letter of 18 August, 1912, said (in part):

> Dear Madam: I *am* interested, and your scheme as far as I understand it seems not only sound, but the only possible method. There is no other magazine in America which is not an insult to the serious artist and to the dignity of his art.
>
> But? Can you teach the American poet that poetry *is* an *art,* an art with a technique, with media, an art that must be in constant flux, a constant change of manner, if it is to live? Can you teach him that it is not a pentametric echo of the sociological dogma printed in last year's magazines . . .

[1]Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 251.

> Quant à moi: If you conceive verse as a living medium, on a par with paint, marble and music, you may announce, if it's any good to you, that for the present such of my work as appears in America will appear exclusively in your magazine . . .
>
> Are you for American poetry or for poetry? The latter is more important, but it is important that America should boost the former, provided it don't mean a blindness to the art. The glory of any nation is to produce art that can be exported without disgrace to its origin.
>
> I don't think we need go to the French extreme of having four prefaces to each poem and eight schools for every dozen of poets, but you must keep an eye on Paris . . .
>
> P.S. Any agonizing that tends to hurry what I believe in the end to be inevitable, our American Risorgimento, is dear to me. That awakening will make the Italian Renaissance look like a tempest in a teapot! . . . [2]

This reply marked the beginning of the collaboration that opened a new era in poetry, and also signalled the opening of a delightful correspondence.

Miss Monroe's circulars met with similar interest from the other poets and *Poetry* was launched, with Pound representing it abroad as Foreign Correspondent. In September, 1912, he wrote:

> We must be taken seriously *at once*. We must be *the voice* not only for the U.S. but internationally . . My idea of our policy is this: We support American poets—preferably the young ones who have a serious determination to produce master-work. We import only such work as is better than that produced at home. The best foreign stuff, the stuff well above mediocrity, or the experiments that seem serious, and seriously and sanely directed toward the broadening and development of The Art of Poetry. And "TO HELL WITH HARPER'S AND THE MAGAZINE TOUCH!"

Ezra Pound continued to send his own work and to encourage clean, direct language and excellence in the works of new exciting poets. ". . . This is the sort of American stuff that I can show here," he wrote in October, 1912, "without its being ridiculed. Objective—no slither; direct—no excessive use of adjectives, no metaphors that won't permit examination . . ."

Pound's early letters to Harriet Monroe were a tonic and an inspiration. When she was depressed by criticism, he wrote consolingly: "Cheer up—we must be better than I thought. If we're not strong enough to irritate fools, we won't get very far." (April, 1913)

[2]Ezra Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950.) References henceforward will be to this edition.

The young poets' work continued to roll in, always encouraged by Pound. He shaped, criticized, offered suggestions, and kept up the spirits of the artists. "After all," he wrote Miss Monroe, "I *do* see nearly everyone that matters." (18 August 1912). This streak of generosity led her to say of him: ". . . the fierce poet-revolutionist proved to be the mildest-mannered man who ever scuttled a Victorian ship, the very soul of courtesy and kindness . . ." [3]

His devotion to poetry was immense and unwearied. Always in his letters to her, he defined and redefined their goals. In January, 1915, his letter raged:

> Poetry must be as well written as prose . . . No words flying off to nothing . . . Rhythm must have meaning . . . There must be no cliches, set phrases, stereotyped journalese . . . Objectivity and again objectivity, no straddled adjectives (as "addled mosses dank") no Tennysoniannes of speech: nothing—nothing that you couldn't in some circumstances, in the stress of some emotion, actually say . . .

Compliments and criticism of *Poetry* poured in: the *Christian Science Monitor* praised it, the *Chicago Tribune* reserved comment, and nearly everyone poked fun at the Imagists.

But Pound and Monroe persisted. "Dear H.M." begins a letter dated 7 November 1913.

> There is no earthly reason why *Poetry* shouldn't *"reach England."* "England" is dead as mutton. If Chicago (or the USA or whatever) will slough off its provincialism, if it will begin to be aware of Paris (or of any other centre save London), if it will feed on all fruit, and produce strength fostered on alert digestion—there's no reason for Chicago or *Poetry* or whatever not being the standard. We've a better list of contributors than any English magazine of poetry (which ain't saying much—but still—)

Pound consistently hammered at this same need for a high standard of poetry:

> Until "we" accept what I've been insisting on for a decade, i.e. a universal standard which pays no attention to time or country—a Weltlitteratur standard—there is no hope. And England hasn't yet accepted such a standard, so we've plenty of chance to do it first . . . All I want is that the "American artist" presuming that he exist shall use not merely London, but Paris, London, Prague, or wherever as a pace-maker . . .

Poetry was launched and gaining strength and muscle with each issue, yet criticism of the subject matter and Pound swirled dangerously. An angry letter dated 23 May 1914 stormed:

[3]Harriet Monroe, *Poets and Their Art* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1926), p. 12.

> Am I expected to confine myself to a Belasco drawingroom? Is modern life, or life of any period, confined to polite and decorous actions or to the bold deeds of stevedores . . . Is art to have no bearing on life whatever? Is it to deal only with situations recognized and sanctioned by Cowper? Can one presuppose a public which has read at least some of the classics? God damn it until America has courage enough to read Voltaire it won't be fit for pigs let alone humans . . .

In all the letters, even the angry ones, Ezra Pound's humor and generosity shine, yet nowhere more than in his caring for the poets he helped. In January 1915, he wrote:

> Dear H.M. . . My problem is to keep alive a certain group of advancing poets, to set the arts in their rightful place as the acknowledged guide and lamp of civilization . . . The arts must be supported in preference to the church and scholarship. Artists first, then, if necessary, professors and parsons. Scholarship is but a hand-maid to the arts. My propaganda for what some may consider "novelty in excess" is a necessity. There are plenty to defend the familiar kind of thing . . .

He introduced them to Harriet Monroe and *Poetry;* he helped shape their work, criticized it, and encouraged clean, direct language. There was Richard Aldington (who) "has his occasional concentrations, and for that reason it is always possible that he will do a fine thing. There is a superficial cleverness in him, then a great and lamentable gap, then the hard point, the true centre, out of which a fine thing may come at any time." (January 1915) Flattery was not Pound's intent, obviously. In the same letter, he added "H.D. and William C. Williams both (have) better emotional equipment than Aldington . . . ought to produce really fine things at great intervals." Of Masters he noted that "he should comb the journalese out of his poems." And again, of Vachel Lindsay: "I wish Lindsay all possible luck but we're not really pulling the same way, though we both pull against entrenched senility . . . "

Of all the poets he loved and cared about and helped, his relationship with T.S. Eliot expressed in his letters to Harriet Monroe is remarkable and exciting. "I was jolly well right about Eliot," he wrote on 30 September 1914,

> He has sent in the best poem I have yet had or seen from an American. PRAY GOD IT BE NOT A SINGLE AND UNIQUE SUCCESS . . . He is the only American I know of who has made what I can call adequate preparation for writing. He has actually trained himself *and* modernized himself *on his own.* The rest of the promising young have done one or the other but never both (most of the swine have done neither.) It is such a comfort to meet a man and not have to tell him to wash his face, wipe his feet, and remember the date (1914) on the calendar.

[4]Monroe, *A Poet's Life,* p. 394.

A year later (October 1915), Pound wrote of Eliot: "In being the first magazine to print Eliot you have scored again. He has intelligence and won't get stuck in one hole. You mark my blossoming word—that young chap will go quite a long way . . ."

In June, 1915, *Poetry* published Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," marking his first appearance as a poet. Harriet Monroe said: "(Its first lines) nearly took our breath away," and brought down upon their heads loud protests from shocked critics.[4]

Just before its publication, Pound wrote:

> Mr. Prufrock does not 'go off at the end.' It is a portrait of failure, or of a character which fails, and it would be false art to make it end on a note of triumph . . . a portrait satire on futility can't end by turning that quintessence of futility, Mr. P. into a reformed character breathing out fire and ozone . . . I assure you it is better, "more unique' than the other poems of Eliot which I have seen. Also that he is quite intelligent (an adjective which is seldom in my mouth.) (31 January 1915)

And again later, he exhorted: "Get on with the Eliot!" The rest is history.

It was due more to Ezra Pound than to any other person that the "Renaissance," or whatever one chooses to call the freer modern impulse in poetry, was on. His method has been fiercely destructive of rooted prejudices, but magically encouraging to every new growth. His mind, being imaginatively creative, presented example as well as precept and offered beautiful poems to the world. Inevitably he gathered around him a group of poets and reached out through them to ever widening areas of influence; until today there is no one writing the poetry of our age who has not, consciously or otherwise, felt the impact of his mind.

FRAN GOODMAN

ELAINE PRIEST